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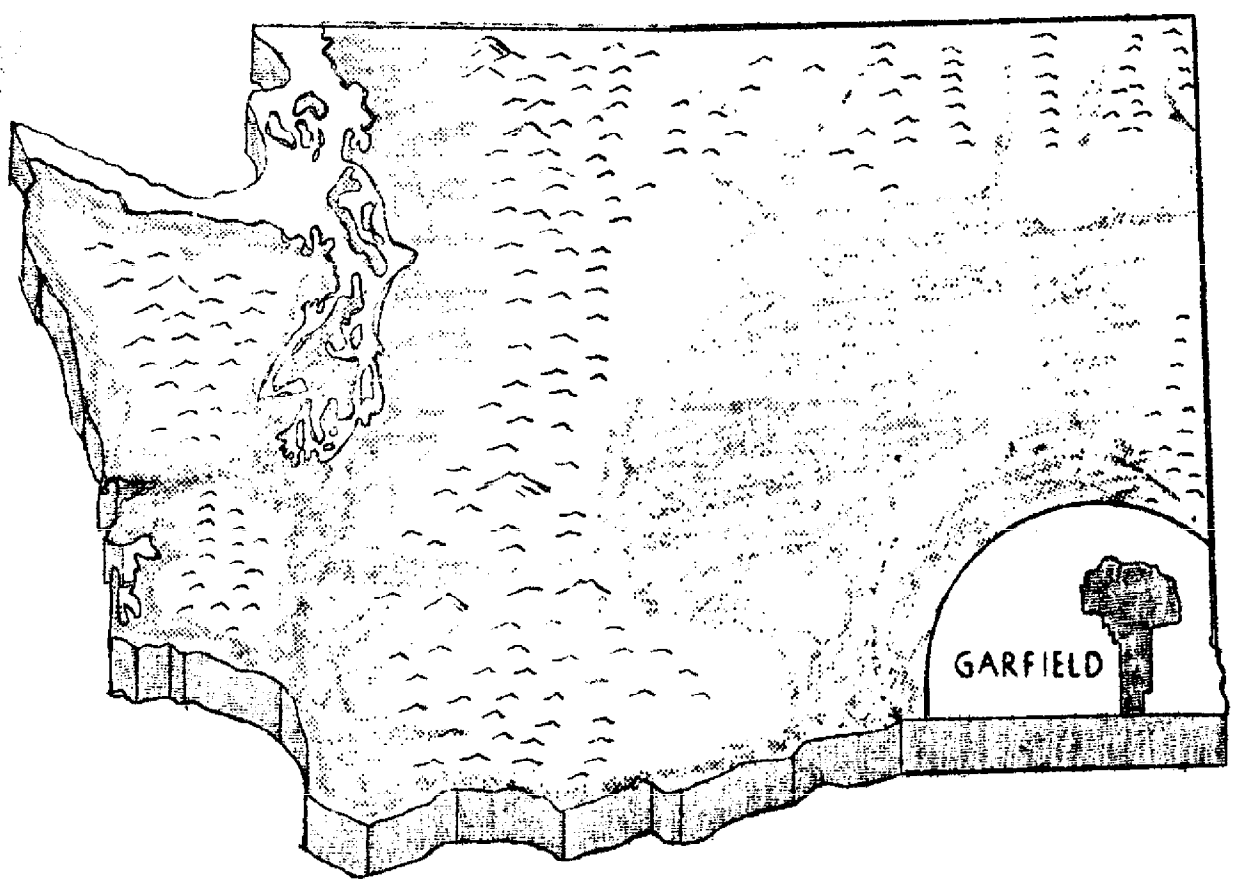
GARFIELD COUNTY

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COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1956



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
J. D. Dwyer, Director

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
S. R. Newell

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
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Seattle 4, Washington

FOREWORD

This book on Garfield County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. This project was initiated in 1956 through funds made available by Sverre N. Omdahl, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 1948-56. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Garfield County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by vocational agriculture and social studies teachers in Garfield County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over all appreciation of Garfield County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1890 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Garfield County in 1881. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Lloyd J. Mercer, graduate student in Agricultural Economics, Washington State University and resident of Addy, Stevens County, wrote the sections on pattern of agriculture, crops, livestock and marketing and collected much original information. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Leonard W. Orvold, D. W. Barrowman, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service prepared tabular material for the book.

J. D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Olympia, Washington
February 1, 1960

Funds for this bulletin provided by the Washington State Department of Agriculture were matched by the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

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PART I

History of Garfield County Agriculture

Introduction

Garfield County is located in the Palouse Hills and Blue Mountains regions of southeastern Washington. The northern part of the county is an agricultural area specializing in grain and legumes, while the southern section is mountainous and forested. With an area of 714 square miles (approximately 456,960 acres) Garfield is thirty-third in size among the thirty-nine Washington counties.

In employment and general economy Garfield is predominantly an agricultural county. It is located in a highly specialized commercial-grain growing region with only minor livestock and poultry industries. During recent years Garfield County has been the tenth ranking county in the state in wheat production and seventh in barley. In sales of livestock and their products, the county ranked thirty-fourth in 1954. The production and canning of green peas is important, ranking fourth in the state and seventeenth in the nation.

Heavy production of wheat and other small grains and peas along with an expanding beef cattle industry, ranks Garfield County nineteenth among Washington counties in value of agricultural products marketed. Farms are generally large and well-managed and most are commercial, high income farms. Productivity per farm is exceptionally high. Although farm sales are the nineteenth highest in the state, the rural farm population of 1,310 is only thirty-fourth among Washington counties.

History 1/

Named in honor of President James A. Garfield, the county was created by Act of the Washington Territorial Legislature on November 29, 1881. It was organized from the eastern part of Columbia County and received its present boundaries in 1883 with the creation of Asotin County. After a long and bitter political struggle, Pomeroy became the county seat in 1884.

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Garfield County was settled relatively late in Washington history. Joint claim to the region by the United States and Great Britain prior to 1846 and Indian hostility up until about 1860 discouraged permanent settlement in most of eastern Washington. Indian bands of the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Yakima, Klickitat, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes roamed what is now Garfield County grazing horses and camping at springs and ponds along the Snake River and Alpowa and Patha Creeks. The ancient Nez Perce trails crossed Garfield County running in an east-west direction and were used extensively by the nomadic Indian tribes. The Nez Perce trails also became the highway of the white men when they began to venture into the new land. Lewis and Clark traveled through the area on these trails in 1806.

In May, 1858, a U. S. Army cavalry detachment under Colonel Edward J. Steptoe traveled this route on the way to Fort Colville. A confederacy of fourteen eastern Washington tribes led by the Yakimas had been brought to an end by a treaty concluded at Fort Walla Walla, June 9, 1855. However, Indian hostility continued to prevail. Colonel Steptoe's detachment was attacked and defeated near Rosalia in present Whitman County by the combined forces of the Spokane, Couer d'Alene and Palouse tribes. A vigorous campaign under Colonel George Wright during 1860 resulted in the conclusion of treaties with some of the northern tribes. By 1870 the Nez Perce, last of the hostile Indian Nations, had accepted peace. Most of the Indians agreed to move onto the Yakima, Colville, Spokane and Umatilla Reservations. The way was then open for permanent settlement of eastern Washington.

Agricultural settlement in Garfield County began in 1860 when Parson Quinn settled in the Patha Valley about eleven miles from the present city of Pomeroy. Other pioneer settlers along Patha Creek were James Bowers, 1861; J. M. Pomeroy, 1864; and James and Walter Wigsby, 1865. Pomeroy settled at the present site of the town bearing his name where he operated a farm and raised stock until 1877. He later plotted lands for the town site.

Early settlers felt that the land, except for the creek and river valleys, was fit only for cattle grazing. Thus, most of them settled along a creek where they would have a ready source of water and firewood. Most early settlers grazed livestock in the surrounding hills and raised gardens on the creek bottoms.

The year of 1870 saw the real beginning of agriculture in Garfield County. During that year the first grain crops were grown on Alpowa ridge and Patha prairie. This demonstrated that it was possible to grow grain on the hills and opened the way for agricultural settlement of the large upland area. Among the

1/ This historical summary has been derived from three sources:

- (1) Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State (American Guide Series) Writers Program, Works Progress Administration. Published by the Washington Historical Society.
- (2) Richard M. Perry. The Counties of Washington, State of Washington, Secretary of State. Olympia, Washington (mimeographed 1943).
- (3) An Illustrated History of Southeastern Washington Including Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin Counties, State of Washington. Western Historical Publishing Company, 1906.

earliest settlers on Patha prairie were the Rev. Mr. Calaway, Isaac Coatney, William Chester, B. F. Morris, Derrick Zammel and Robert Storey. Settlement continued rapidly through the 1870's after the fertility of the Palouse Hills lands had been proven.

Grain production did not reach its potential in Garfield County until a reliable and economical means of transportation became available. By 1884, about 2,000,000 bushels of grain were produced in Garfield County each year. All of this had to be moved to market by water transport or by wagon. The result was that much grain was not marketed until almost a year after it was harvested. Following many difficulties, a branch of the Oregon Navigation and Railroad Company's line reached Pomeroy in January, 1886. Many new settlers came to the county during 1887 and 1888 after the area was opened up by the availability of economical transportation for crops.

The Census of 1890 reported 3,897 people living in Garfield County. Between 1890 and 1910 the population of the county continued to increase with the peak census total of 4,199 being recorded in 1910. The county's economy became centered more and more in cash-grain production and in 1903 there were 1,600,000 bushels of barley and 700,000 bushels of wheat threshed in Garfield County. Commercial wheat production on the drylands using the summer-fallow program became a highly successful type of agriculture. In 1920 almost 62,000 acres of wheat were harvested in Garfield County.

Eastern Washington prosperity began to decline in the late 1920's as a result of low prices and world-wide surpluses of wheat. With the depression years of the 1930's and poor market outlets after 1929, wheat production declined and prices dropped by one-half between 1929 and 1931. This caused economic hardship in Garfield County with its heavy dependence on wheat as a cash crop.

A major change occurred in Garfield County agriculture as a result of the wheat marketing situation of the 1920-1940 period. Many small wheat farms were abandoned, sold or consolidated with others to form larger units. Between 1900 and 1920 the number of farms in the county declined from 521 to 413. During the 1920-1940 period another 80 farms were abandoned or consolidated with other units. With the disappearance of numerous small unmechanized family farms and decreased need for labor to work in agriculture, many people left Garfield County for industrial and urban areas of the Pacific Northwest. Some migration also occurred in the early 1940's when defense industries sought manpower from the farming regions of America. As a result of this trend, Garfield County's population dropped from 3,875 in 1920 to 3,383 in 1940.

In 1929 F. C. Sloan of Walla Walla County introduced green peas with high success in that county on Walla Walla and Palouse soils. During the early 1940's the production of green peas began on similar soils in Garfield County. The crop is grown under contract with one of the major canning companies. This introduced some diversification into the county's agriculture which had previously specialized in wheat.

Agricultural development has been encouraged and guided by several agencies and private enterprises. Technical guidance in improvement of grain production and animal husbandry was received from the State College of Washington Experiment Stations: the Dryland Experiment Station at Lind and the

Irrigation Experiment Station at Prosser. Assistance in plant industry and animal husbandry also was received from County Extension Agents of the State College Extension Service located in Pomeroy.

Private agencies which have influenced expansion or improvement of farm commodity groups within the county include a number of local and state associations. Among these are the Washington Wheat Growers Association, the Washington Cattlemen's Association, Washington Crop Improvement Association, Washington Pea Growers Association, the Washington Wool Growers Association and the Garfield County Fruit Growers.